

Bethel Church - Memorial Day

Nebo

Nebo, a small trading settlement in the valley east of Gravette, now referred to as "Old Town," was established in the 1870s, located on the line between section No. 12 and 13 of Township 20, Range 32, West. The land was owned by Joseph P. Covey who platted the town of Nebo before moving to Southwest City, Missouri, in 1881.

Application for Nebo Post Office was dated February 4, 1878, signed by Abraham Watson, who was the first postmaster. It consisted of a post office, a few businesses, a blacksmith, a church used by all denominations, Dr. W. D. Foster, a post of G.A.R. #62, organized August 29, 1888; Bethel Masonic Lodge #232 moved to Nebo in 1882.

This valley was called Chalk Valley and is where E. T. Gravett started the Chalk Valley Distillery and owned a general merchandise store. The distillery later was owned by R. W. Covey and E. M. Gravett. They made a pure sour mash whiskey called "Old Chalk." Ed M. Gravett became sole owner of this distillery and warehouse in 1894.

Ellis Tillman Gravett, wife Nannie and son Edwin Moore, and his brother, James Nelson Gravett, his wife and son Ben, came west from Kentucky in 1873. Nannie and Edwin returned to Kentucky where she died a few years later. E. T. married Laura

Bullock in 1878. Edwin came back to Nebo in 1890 and bought his father's interest in the Chalk Valley Distillery.

He married Ida Johnson. Their children, Eva, Dove, Ellis Trent and Veta, were all raised in Gravett.

J. W. McAllister and family came from Kansas to Nebo about 1889 where he then operated a general store and small hotel.

The Roller Flouring Mill, erected by R. W. Covey and Milton Witty, then owned by Covey and son, operated in Chalk Valley until moving to Southwest City, Missouri, in 1910.

The Nebo I.O.O.F. #118 was chartered in Nebo February 1893, before moving to the new town of Gravett, also the Chalk Valley Daughters of Rebekah #47 and Nebo Chapter #195 Order of Eastern Star.

It was in 1893, while George Bates, a drug store owner, was postmaster that Nebo Post Office moved to the new town and the name was changed to Gravett August 15, 1894.

Other businessmen in the valley were J. A. Ragsdale, Charles E. Thomas, John Patton, Dan Thomas, D. M. Edwards. Most of them moved to the new town, some of them moving buildings as well as merchandise.

In 1898, R. W. Covey built another distillery and bonded warehouse in Nebo.

THE CHALK VALLEY DISTILLERY

Is the place to cure

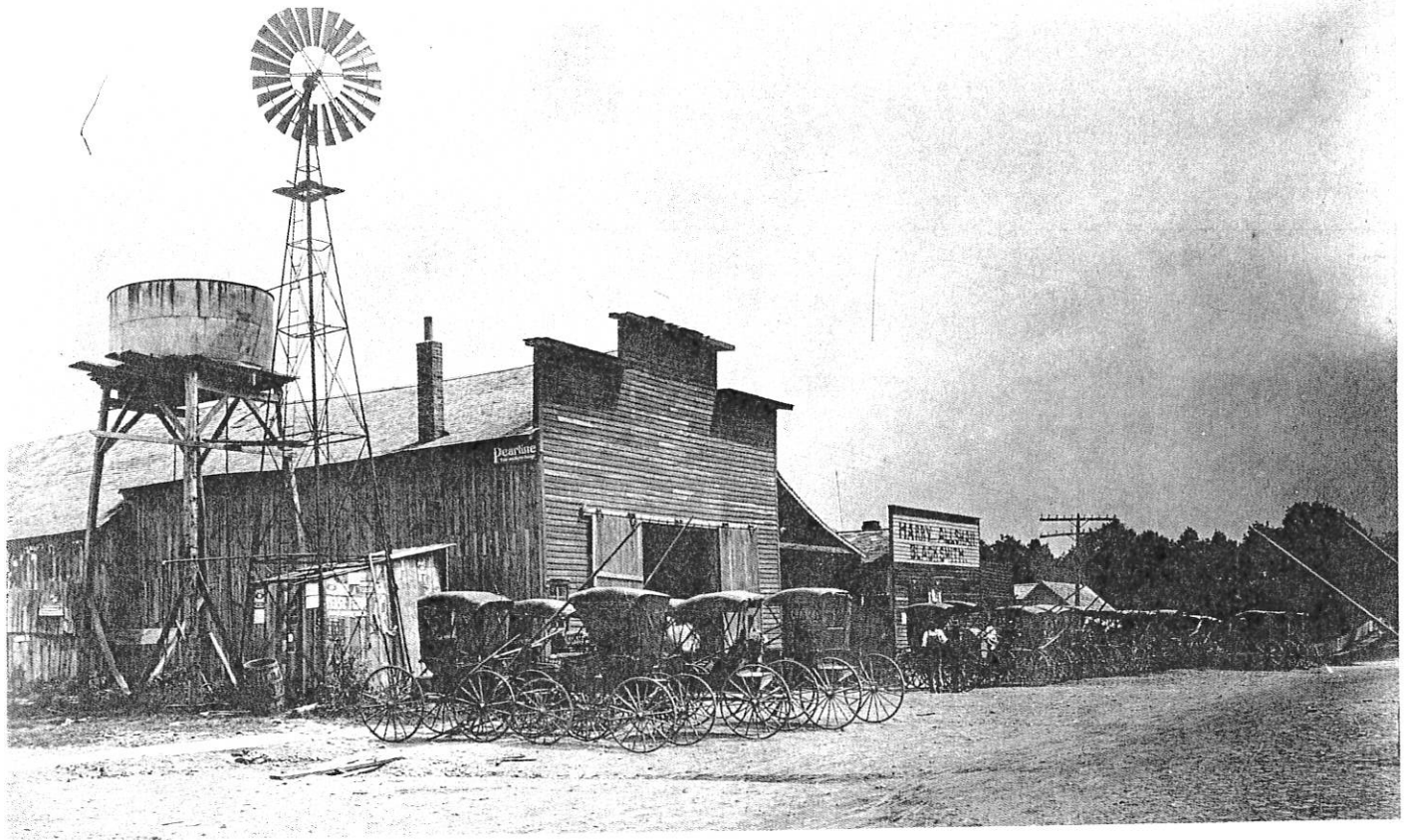
Rattle-snake Bites.

E. M. GRAVETT, Proprietor,
And Wholesale Liquor Dealer.

All Goods Re-gauged and Outage Guaranteed not to exceed the Carlisle Bill. Mail orders promptly attended to.

This page sponsored by Dr. Bruce and Linda Martin

Early History



First city well, McAllister Livery Stable and Harry Allsman Blacksmith Shop

EARLY HISTORY OF GRAVETTE

Gravette is located in the northwest corner of Benton County. The original plat, south side of Main Street to Dallas Street, is from the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 12, Township 20, Range 30 west, granted August 1, 1849, by President Zachary Taylor to Alfred Wallace.

These 40 acres were passed from Alfred and Martha Wallace to Benoni and Elizabeth Caldwell to Martha J. Covey to James and Permelia Neeley to Ambrose G. and S. A. Williams to Elijah Keith to W. G. and Ann E. Foley to John H. Jackson to J. R. and S. A. Covey to J. W. and Rebecca Setser. September 10, 1889, Ellis T. and Laura R. Gravett purchased this land from the Setsters.

The north half of the original plat from north side of Main Street to Detroit Street is from the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 12, granted to John B. Ross by President Grover Cleveland, May 4, 1885.

This was purchased by E. T. and L. R. Gravett from John B. and Nancy C. Ross February 5, 1891. The original part of Gravett was from the west side of the railroad right of way to 4th Street east and contained 80 acres.

In 1891, Ellis Tillman Gravett, who was in the general mercantile business in Nebo, moved his store to what became Lot #1 of block #14 when the town was platted, where the Bank of Gravett is now located.

September 22, 1892, J. W. McAllister purchased a strip of land from E. T. Gravett. This later became lots #9 and 10 of Block #14 where he built the McAllister Hotel where City Hall is now, and lots #6 and 7 of block #11 (where Pazazz's brick building is now) where he built the McAllister Livery Barn. One of the first city wells was on the corner of Main and 2nd Streets next to the livery barn.



Ellis Tillman Gravett

The Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad had reach Sulphur Springs and was looking for a route south to the Gulf. July 17, 1893, E. T. and Laura Gravett signed the right of way to the railroad company.

Also, July 17, 1893, one-half interest in the remaining to the site, except for the lots already sold, was signed over to the Missouri Coal and Construction Co. to be platted out as a town site with Mr. Gravett as manager of the site. The plat was filed July 26, 1893.

October 14, 1893, the Missouri Coal and Construction Co. sold their one-half interest to the Philadelphia Construction Co. who must have been a land agent for the railroad company.

The *Benton County Democrat* newspaper, July 6, 1893, reported, "E. T. Gravett has laid out a town site on 80 acres near Nebo through which the Kansas City Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad

will run."

Then in the August 10, 1893, paper, "J. R. Dunagin of Avoca has rented J. W. Rhamy's new store house in Gravett," which must have been the first store built after the town of Gravett was platted, being opened August 9, 1893, Gravette's birthday.

The first train ran through Gravett January 1894.

E. T. Gravett sold his store to Young and Webb and devoted his time to real estate promoting the sale of town lots.

In 1894, E. T. Gravett built a large new home on the corner of Main and 4th Streets. This was later bought by Milt McAllister family and is where his daughter, Marguerite McAllister, still resides. At the same time his son, Edwin Gravett, built his home just west of the railroad tracks, now on Dallas Street S.W. This ten-room house on eight acres remained in the Gravett family un-

til it was sold to Newt and Ruby Douglas in 1944. It sold to Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Mount about 1959.

In September 1894, when A. C. Veach and wife Gertrude and their two children, Maree and Albert of Edna, Kansas, moved to Gravett to publish a weekly newspaper, the town included: nine stores, a new school, Masonic lodge and Odd Fellows both with buildings, five church organizations, Methodist and Adventist with building, Baptist, Christian, Cumberland Presbyterian, and a Holiness preacher; a hotel and a new one being built east of the depot and there was talk of a second railroad coming from Bentonville—Gravett was on the move.

August 15, 1896, Mr. Veach tells of the early days of Gravett in his article, "Looking Backward."

LOOKING BACKWARD.

Where We Started Three Years Ago
And What We Have Done—A
Remarkable Growth.

Three years ago where now stands a prosperous little city of six hundred progressive people, was a barren spot with but one store, and from that small start the city of Gravett has been the offspring. About five years ago Mr. E. T. Gravett, who was in business in old Nebo, moved his store to where the old building now stands on the east side of town. He enjoyed a lucrative trade thus alone and five miles from a rail road station—Sulphur Springs then being the southern terminus of the now famous P. & G. Railroad. About three years ago the rail road company began to extend the road south from the springs, and the whole country round-a-bout was surveyed and much wire pulling was done, but it seems that Mr. Gravett overcame the combined forces and convinced the company that it was to their interest to wade through the mountain and erect a station on the summit. To this he was a liberal subscriber, and in January 1894 the first train whistled for Gravett. A town was platted out on eighty acres of land and Mr. Gravett was put in as manager of the town site. Subsequently he quit the merchantile business and has devoted his entire attention to the building up of the town, and under his management and di-

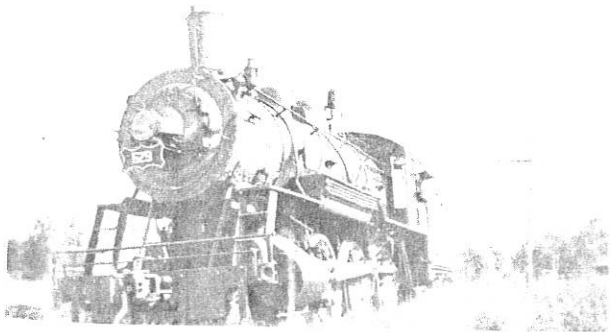
rection the town which bears his name has made a more rapid progress than any new town on the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf railroad south of Kansas City.

Mr. Gravett sold his store to Young & Webb who have since erected a large brick store building on the corner of Railroad and Main streets where they are now doing a thriving business. Among the first business firms of the town were Geo. L. Bates, post master and druggist; J. A. Ragsdale, groceries; Dunagin & Deason, dry goods; C. E. Thomas, dry goods; J. W. Rhamy, notions; Adkins & McAllister, lumber dealers; Croxdale & Elderkin, general merchandise; T. J. Plater & Son, general merchandise; J. W. McAllister, hotel and livery; J. A. Lewis, blacksmith; H. T. McDaniel barber and jeweler; J. B. Ross, wagon maker and a pioneer in this country; two physicians, Dr. W. Foster and Dr. J. J. Johnson. The Odd Fellows and Masons each erected two story frame buildings the first year the town was started. In Nebo, a half mile east of Gravett we have one of the best flouring mills in Northwest Arkansas, erected by Covey & Witty, now owned by Covey & Covey; the famous Chalk Valley Distillery, of which the genial E. M. Gravett is sole proprietor, and D. W. Thomas, dealer in general merchandise.

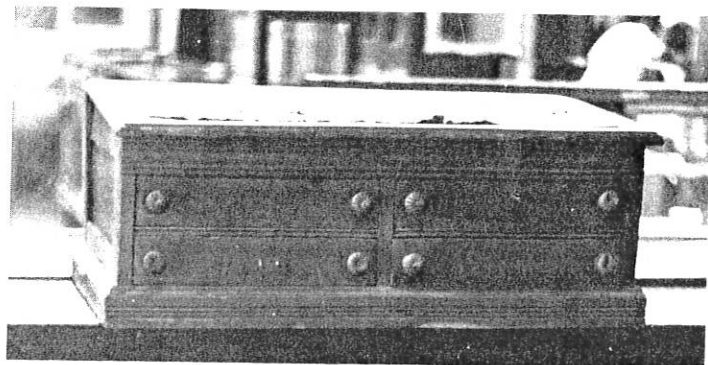
We now have a prosperous little city of over six hundred people and over fifty business representations, all in a good healthy condition; three large brick busi-

ness houses; a large school building where we have nine months school each year. The best of instructors are employed and a first-class graded school is conducted. Two church edifices and five church organizations, viz: M. E. S., Baptist, Adventist, Cumberland Presbyterian and Christian. In civic societies we have the F. & A. M., I. O. O. F., K. of P., Eastern Star and Daughters of Rebekah. In all we have as law abiding moral and intelligent people as can be found on the face of God's green earth. A people who extend to the stranger from any country an open and cordial welcome to spread his blanket and live in peace under our our vine and fig tree, where health, peace and plenty abound.

The celebration of the third anniversary of our town on last Saturday was a grand affair. Large crowds were here from our sister towns to participate in our jubilee and a grand time was had by all. In connection, we might say our town has never seen a "boom day." Nine-tenths of our residents own their homes and places of business. The floating and speculative populous have never infested our town. Gravett has, since its start, enjoyed a good healthy growth, and her citizens extend an invitation to all who are looking for an opportunity to carve out for themselves a home in the apple orchard of the world, to come to Gravett.



The last train to run on the Frisco Railroad September 1940. Picture was taken near the Hotel Gravette. The engineer was Elmer Hollenbeck who supplied this picture.



Spool cabinet from E. T. Gravett's store



Bethel Masonic Lodge on Main Street in Nebo about 1890.

Early Communities

EARLY COMMUNITIES AND POST OFFICES

Spavinaw Post Office

The first post office in this area was Spavinaw located on Spavinaw Creek, southeast of Gravette off Stagecoach Road. It was established in 1852 with Abraham Whinery, postmaster, until 1866. General Abraham Whinery and family were some of the earliest settlers of this county. The Whinerys came from Tennessee to Washington County in 1828 and on to Benton County settling on Spavinaw in 1839.

Whinery served under Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812. He was part of the original Arkansas Constitutional Convention in 1836, was later state senator, inspector general and lieutenant commander of northwest Arkansas.

Other postmasters of Spavinaw Post Office were David R. Turney and William F. White. The post office closed in 1882.

Pond Post Office

Pond Post Office was located south of Spavinaw, established in 1890 by Hiram Pond and closed in 1904. Postmasters were Hiram Pond, John M. John, and Joseph A. Fair.

The coldest temperature in the state of Arkansas was recorded at Pond on February 13, 1905, at 29 degrees below zero.

Clementine Post Office

Clementine Post Office was established in 1891 by Clementine McLaughlin. It was located west of Pond. Other postmasters were Sarah E. Rodgers and Wiley C. Sitton. It was discontinued in 1906.

Bethel Community

Bethel was a small community, south of Gravette, no post office, one small store, two churches and Bethel Cemetery. Antioch Baptist Church was on the south side of the cemetery and was in existence about 1892-1927. Bethel Methodist Episcopal - South

Church was on the north side of the cemetery. The cemetery dates back before the Civil War. One grave is the final resting place of six unknown Union soldiers buried during the war by the women and elderly men of the community.

Bethel Masonic Lodge was organized at the Huff's Mill on Spavinaw near Bethel in 1869.

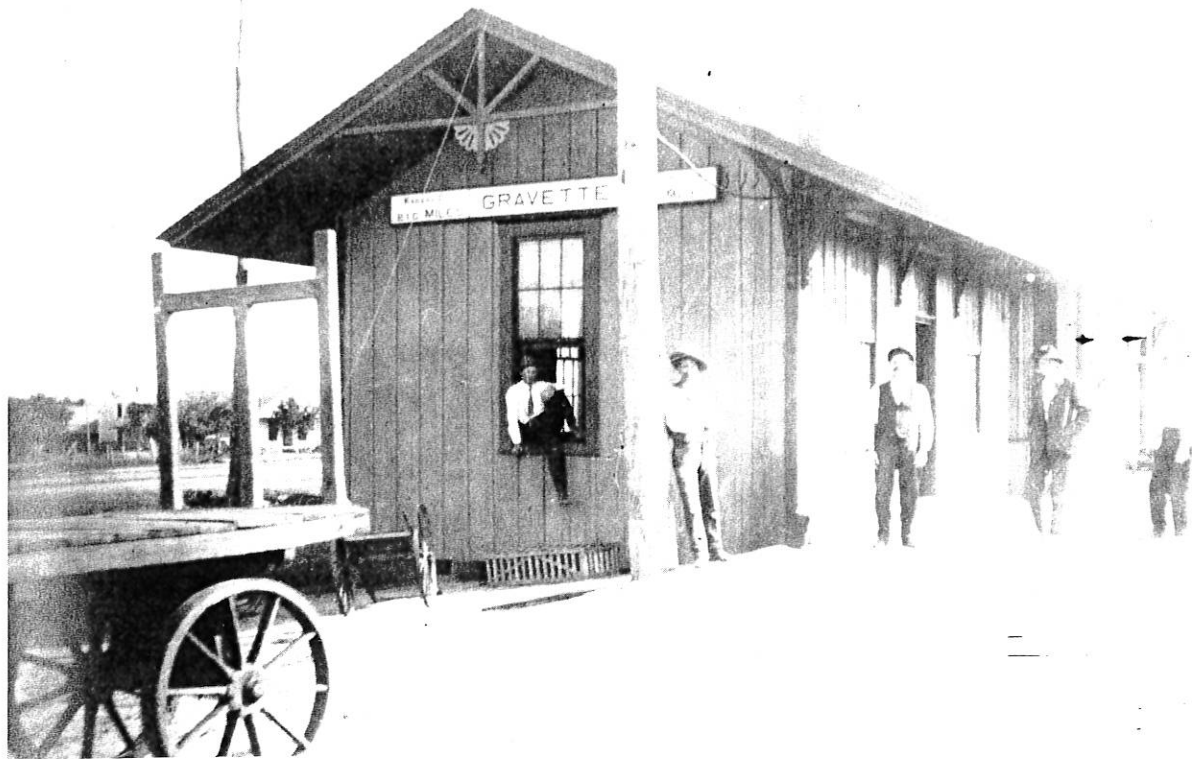
The Methodist Church building was purchased by B. C. Phillips and neighbors to use for memorial services and funerals, placing the title in the hands of trustees of the cemetery, J. H. Holt, E. Austin, Kit Phillips and their successors. This building was preceded by another one built long before the Civil War. Cars Phillips' father was choir leader there in the services in that first building.

Some Early Settlers of this Area

From memories of Hugh L. Fair in 1960.

Bryant Austin and Henry Austin about 1852; Sam Shelton 1826; J. W. Ware 1850; John Wallace 1850; W. H. Hastings 1826; Lemuel Phillips 1826 (there are five graves on this place); Parker Crowder 1830; David Holt 1853; (David Holt, his wife and son George Holt, and a granddaughter are buried on this farm); J. V. Hawes 1860 (two graves on this place); David Turney 1860; J. I. Patton 1852; John Golston 1860; John May 1856 (four graves on this place); J. Y. Carpenter 1850; "Tarheel" Jackson 1860; (one grave on this place); Ambrose Williams 1830 (four graves on this place); there was a wool cording machine near this place.

A man named Newsom ran a store in the mouth of the hollow the south end of the Spavinaw Bridge. There were three grist mills in the area, one ran by J. D. Patton, one by Henry Holt and one by G. R. Alden, and one by Jake Setser who also ran a store in connection where you could buy calico for three cents a yard and pure cane whiskey for 20 cents a pint. (Charlie Holt place). (Or the big hollow just east of this was a "Blind Tiger" where you could buy a quart.)



Kansas City Southern Depot, Gravette, Arkansas

THE KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN

In the latter part of the 19th century our country was facing a recession but that did not stop Arthur E. Stillwell who wanted to build a railroad from Kansas City to the gulf. The track-laying began in 1890 in Kansas City and reached Joplin in 1893. With money in short supply, investors were not interested in continuing with the new railroad.

Arthur Stillwell would not give up his plan. He went to Holland where he talked to some investors who agreed to invest three million dollars to move the track-building on south. Finally, in September of 1897, the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf was within 12 miles of Beaumont, Texas. Stillwell again ran out of money and he was forced out of the company and new investors came in and named the railroad the Kansas City Southern.

Stillwell's thoughts while building the railroad were to give the farmers of the midwest a means of shipping grain to the gulf. Port Arthur's shipping business was not as good as Stillwell had anticipated.

In January 1901, a very lucrative business helped save the railroad. This was the discovery of oil near Beaumont, Texas. This solved the railroad's financial trouble. Refineries and petrochemical plants grew out of the oil industry adding revenue to the Kansas City Southern.

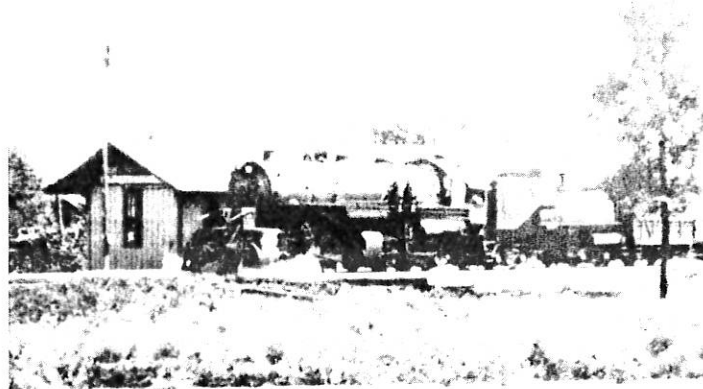
Another merger came about in 1907 which took the railroad into New Orleans.

The streamliner passenger train, diesel-powered *Southern Bell*, started its journey from Kansas City to New Orleans in 1941 and ran continuously until 1969.

In 1976, the coal trains came down the line to furnish fuel for three electric generating plants. Large paper mills, chemical plants, lumber mills, and feed for the poultry industry added to the growth of the Kansas City Southern. And, this railroad keeps rolling through Gravette as it did in 1893 when the town of Gravette was started---a century ago!

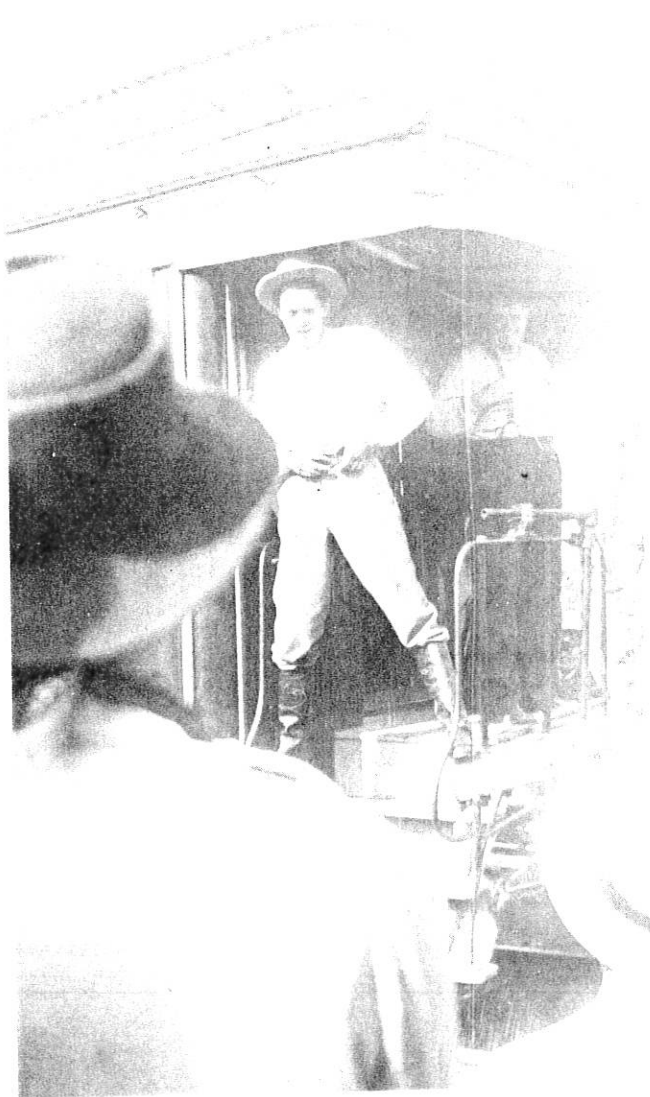


The Gravette depot interior, 1910, Agent Hilboldt at the ticket window and telegrapher, Robert Preston.



Yesterday's Glory . . . Today's Decay

Appeared in the *Gravette News Herald* in the 1970s



Henry Fonda, September 5, 1938, during the filming of the movie "Jesse James"

What appear to be stepping stones into the past, these rotting railroad cross-ties are virtually all that remain of a railroad which used to serve Gravette and several other towns in northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma.

Originally known as the Arkansas & Oklahoma Railroad, the company which installed these tracks was organized by a group of Rogers business men in early 1898.

They purchased and rebuilt the tracks of the defunct Bentonville Railway Company which ran from Rogers to Bentonville, and then devised a plan for extending the line westward.

By raising capital at various towns along the line—Gravette business men pledged at least \$5,000—the A & O ribbons of steel started west from Bentonville in May of 1898.

Throughout the summer the work progressed with glowing promises that the road would be completed to Gravette by July 4; then by the August 9 picnic; and finally before "the snow flies."

As the story unfolded in the pages of the *Gravette News*, it remained for this entry on December 31, 1898, to seal the completion of the line from Gravette to Bentonville.

"The A & O Railroad has at last reached a connection with the K.C.P. & G. at Gravette, and regular trains are running between Bentonville and Gravette. Of course there is yet considerable work to be done on the road in the way of surfacing, leveling up, etc., which will be done in good time.

"Yesterday morning the company received two new coaches for service on the new line. One is an elegant passenger coach, fitted up with all modern conveniences, and the other is a combination coach to be used as a smoker and baggage car.

"They are just from the shops and are as handsome as any to be found on the roads in the west."

Later the road was completed to Southwest City, Missouri, in 1899 and on to Grove, Indian Territory, in 1900, when finance was depleted and construction stopped.

In 1900 the company had two locomotives, three passenger cars, one baggage car and one freight car.

Later that year Frisco purchased the line and operated it for many years.

In the year 1938, scenes for the movie "Jesse James" were filmed along a stretch of the track near Mt. Pleasant—one of them being a "night scene" which was shot in the daylight.

It was in 1940 that the line was finally abandoned, and the following year the rails were stripped up and sold for scrap iron. Many said the iron went to Japan to be used for armaments, but this is probably not so.

Most of the roadbed has been leveled by time and only a few scattered rotting ties remain.

The telegraph lines were removed less than five years ago, but one can occasionally find an old cross-arm, complete with insulators.

It was in June of 1898, that Editor Veatch wrote: "With our railroad, will come factories and industries of various kinds which give employment to labor which makes the future look very bright to say the least.

"We now have a population of nearly 1,000 and we feel satisfied saying that within two years we will more than double our present population."

So out of the past comes another chapter of our town's history which promised great things for Gravette—the Gate City.